

Fauquier County Government Mentoring Program

Mentoring is a workplace partnership between two people that provides the opportunity to share professional skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process. Mentoring is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share. The Fauquier County Government Mentoring Program is designed to

- ❑ assist new employees in making successful employment transitions into Fauquier County Government;
- ❑ support positive morale, effective communications, and collegiality;
- ❑ build a sense of professionalism and positive attitude;
- ❑ develop employees professionally; and
- ❑ retain quality employees.

Program Benefits

The Mentoring Program provides benefits to all participants of the process. New employees gain

- ❑ increased knowledge and skills;
- ❑ improved understanding of their roles in the organization;
- ❑ insight into the culture and unwritten rules of the organization;
- ❑ a supportive environment in which to evaluate successes and failures;
- ❑ a smoother transition through managerial levels; and
- ❑ development of professional confidence and self-confidence.

Mentors experience

- ❑ a renewed enthusiasm for their roles as experienced employees;
- ❑ the opportunity for challenging discussions with people who possess fresh perspectives and who are not part of traditional organizational thinking;
- ❑ satisfaction derived from contributing to the new employee's development;
- ❑ the opportunity to reflect upon and articulate their roles;
- ❑ the ability to share experience and knowledge; and

- ❑ enhanced knowledge of other areas of the organization.

The Mentoring Program affords the County Government

- ❑ improved staff service delivery through more informed and skilled staff;
- ❑ improved communication between departments of the County Government;
- ❑ support networks for employees; and
- ❑ potentially reduced recruitment and selection costs as a result of higher employee retention.

Mentor Selection

Mentors play an integral role in the success of the Mentoring Program and must be carefully selected. Mentors are selected based on the following criteria:

- ❑ the mentor will be an individual whose employment position with the County is equivalent to, or a higher level than, the new employee's employment position;
- ❑ the mentor will have successfully completed three years of employment with the County Government. Successful employment is defined as receiving annual performance appraisals of "meets expectations" or better.
- ❑ The mentor will possess a flexible and progressive management style, particularly with respect to interpersonal skills and employee relations;
- ❑ the mentor will be trustworthy and able to maintain confidentiality;
- ❑ the mentor's personal style will be compatible with and suit the needs of the new employee;
- ❑ the mentor will be cognizant of the needs of a new staff member;
- ❑ the mentor will be an individual who will enjoy helping the new employee develop skills and knowledge, and be able to share knowledge and experience openly and honestly;
- ❑ the mentor will be someone other than the new employee's immediate supervisor, in order for the new employee to expand networks, and to avoid potentially conflicting roles;
- ❑ the mentor will complete a prescribed mentor training program; and

- ❑ the mentor will be committed to meeting the needs of new employees and the Mentoring Program.

Mentor Assignment

Upon employment with Fauquier County Government, supervisory level employees (to include supervisors, managers, and Department Heads) will be assigned a mentor. This assignment will be made by the Mentor Program Coordinator (Human Resources Director) in consultation with the County Administrator/designee. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers may request a mentor assignment for non-supervisory new hires. Mentors will normally be allowed to work with only one new employee at a time, unless approval is granted by the County Administrator/designee to do otherwise.

Roles and Responsibilities

In order for the mentoring relationship to be successful, participants must be committed to fulfilling certain roles and responsibilities. To clarify roles and responsibilities, the mentor and new employee should enter into a written agreement regarding

- ❑ learning objectives of their mentoring relationship;
- ❑ frequency of meetings;
- ❑ meeting times; and
- ❑ length of meeting sessions.

The mentor/new employee relationship should allow for flexibility while at the same time provide structure that develops and maintains a commitment to the relationship.

Mentors must be willing to

- ❑ serve as a resource and referral person;
- ❑ share experiences and knowledge;
- ❑ listen, coach, facilitate;
- ❑ provide encouragement, support, and advise;
- ❑ assist with personal development when possible; and
- ❑ be committed to helping the new employee succeed within the organization.

Mentors will be required to meet with the new employees' Department Head/Constitutional Officer. This/these meeting(s) will be held to apprise mentors of goals set for new employees that the mentor may be able to facilitate. Meetings will be held as often or as infrequent as needed by the mentor and Department Head/Constitutional Officer. It should be clear that

mentors possess no supervisory authority with respect to new employees. Further, it should be understood that the employee/employer relationship does not extend to mentors. Unless permission is granted by the new employee, the mentor will not be privy to any new employee personnel information (i.e., performance evaluations, discipline record, etc.).

New employees must

- ❑ be open to working with a mentor;
- ❑ be receptive to advice and counsel;
- ❑ be willing to learn new skills;
- ❑ be committed to carrying out agreed upon mentoring goals;
- ❑ be honest and open with the mentor; and
- ❑ be willing to accept responsibility for their own learning, growth and development.

The County Government recognizes its role in the successful implementation of mentor relationships. Participants in the Mentoring Program will be allowed to fully engage in the Program during working hours. Employees must be sensitive, however, to assigned duties and departmental responsibilities when making appointments with their mentors or new employees.

Program Timelines and Evaluation

The Mentoring Program is of a one year duration period.

At the conclusion of the first three months of the Program period, the mentoring relationship will be assessed in consultation with the Program Coordinator to determine if Program and individual goals are being met and if the relationship is beneficial for the new employee.

At the end of the Program year, the Program Coordinator will meet with the mentor and new employee to determine if Program goals have been achieved. Both participants will be asked to evaluate the Mentoring Program at the conclusion of the mentoring relationship.

Program Extension

Under certain circumstances the formal mentoring relationship may be extended beyond a one-year period, with agreement from the mentor, the Program Coordinator, and the new employee's Department Head/Constitutional Officer or other supervisor. In many instances, informal mentoring relationships may continue after the conclusion of the formal Program timelines.

Problems in the Mentoring Relationship

It is recognized that from time to time problems may arise in the mentoring relationship. In such cases, Program participants are encouraged to attempt to work through issues to reach resolution. If either participant feels that the mentoring relationship is not progressing satisfactorily, either party may request a change with the Program Coordinator.

Records Administration

The Program Coordinator will be responsible for records maintenance and administration as related to the Fauquier County Mentoring Program.